



Pro Bono Practices and Opportunities in the Czech Republic¹

INTRODUCTION

Since its establishment in 1993, the Czech Republic has enacted a variety of legislation governing the provision of legal aid. However, the regulation of the procedure for granting legal aid has not yet been unified under a comprehensive legal aid act. In January 2015, the Draft Act on Free Legal Aid² (the “**Draft Act**”) was presented to the Government. It aimed to create one unified legal regime for the provision of legal aid in court proceedings and proceedings in other governmental and administrative bodies. However, on February 16, 2015 the Cabinet issued a negative advisory opinion on the Draft Act³ and ultimately the Draft Act was rejected as the Government felt the drafting was not clear and conflicted with provisions of the existing regime. Legal reform in this sector is, however, on the agenda of the Ministry of Justice for 2015. It intends to publish details of its own proposed Draft Act later this year. Should that proposal be accepted, it is likely to take effect in early 2017.

The number of requests for legal aid is increasing and public knowledge of the possibility of applying for free legal aid is more widespread. Indeed, recent trends and improvements are cause for cautious optimism. As the Czech Republic moves away from its Communist past and continues to conform its legal system to the EU and other international obligations, legal aid reform has made headway. Improvements have been made towards streamlining and standardising the processes through which parties may request legal aid from the courts and the Czech Bar Association.

In terms of pro bono legal work, several non-governmental organizations (“**NGOs**”) have become firmly established in the country, providing free legal assistance, particularly in the areas of asylum and immigration. However, the Czech Republic lacks an entrenched pro bono culture and while attorneys may undertake an occasional pro bono case, such activities are not widespread.

OVERVIEW OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM

The Justice System

Constitution and Governing Laws

The Czech legal system is a civil law system based on the Austro-Hungarian codes. The current Constitution of the Czech Republic was adopted on December 16, 1992 (the “**Constitution**”), just before Czechoslovakia peacefully split into the Czech and Slovak Republics.⁴ The Czech Republic joined NATO in March 1999 and the EU in May 2004, and these developments brought new international influences and obligations to the structure of the Czech legal system.⁵

¹ This chapter was originally drafted in 2012 with the support and assistance of Kinstellar and updated in 2015 with the support and assistance of the Prague office of Havel, Holásek & Partners s.r.o.

² See http://www.psp.cz/sqw/text/orig2_sqw?idd=112513 (last visited on September 4, 2015) for the Draft Act proposed by a group of Members of the Parliament.

³ See <http://www.vlada.cz/cz/clenove-vlady/pri-uradu-vlady/jiri-dienstbier/aktualne/vlada-zamitla-dva-poslanecke-navrhy-akonou-126803/> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁴ Constitution of the Czech Republic.

⁵ See e.g. Martindale-Hubbell Law Digest, Czech Republic Law Digest 1 (LexisNexis Martindale-Hubbell 2007).



Courts System

Types and levels of courts

The court hierarchy in the Czech Republic comprises of district, regional and superior courts. With a few exceptions, matters of first instance are heard before one of the 86 district courts, and appeals are heard in the eight regional courts and two superior courts. The Supreme Court is the highest court in all matters except constitutional and administrative matters, which are heard by the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Administrative Court, respectively. All three courts of last instance have their seat in Brno.⁶

Although the Constitutional Court serves as the ultimate judicial instance in the Czech Republic, where the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the “**Convention**”) is breached, applicants may bring complaints against their state before the European Court of Human Rights. If this Court declares that a violation of the Convention has occurred the applicant is usually awarded compensation and Czech law provides for renewal of the relevant domestic proceedings. There are only about a dozen of such cases in the Czech Republic annually.

Judges

To be eligible for appointment as a judge in the Czech Republic each candidate must meet the following criteria:

- be a Czech national;
- have full legal capacity and be of good character;
- have a university degree;
- have suitable personal experience and moral qualities;
- pass a professional judicial examination; and
- take the oath of a judge before the President of the Czech Republic.⁷

On meeting each of the above conditions, a judge will be appointed by the President of the Czech Republic and assume office on taking the oath. Judges may join the Judicial Union of the Czech Republic, a voluntary professional association. The general meeting of the Judicial Union has adopted the Ethical Principles of the Conduct of Judges as moral principles in judicial activities.⁸

The Practice of Law

Education

To become an attorney in the Czech Republic, the candidate needs to meet the following criteria:

- be registered on the publicly accessible list of lawyers maintained by the Czech Bar Association;
- have full legal capacity;
- have a university degree in law obtained at one of the four accredited law faculties in the Czech Republic;
- have at least three years’ prior legal experience as an articulated clerk;
- be of good character;
- pass a professional examination for lawyers; and
- take an oath before the Chairperson of the Czech Bar Association.

There are no pro bono requirements to register as an attorney.⁹

⁶ Id. at 7. See also zákon č. 6/2002 or Michal Bobek, An Introduction to the Czech Legal System and Legal Resources Online (August 2006), available at http://www.nyulawglobal.org/globalex/czech_republic.htm (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁷ See http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/legal_prof/legal_prof_cze_en.htm (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁸ Id.

⁹ See http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/legal_prof/legal_prof_cze_en.htm (last visited on September 4, 2015).



Demographics

Since the fall of Communism in the Czech Republic, the number of Czech attorneys has increased quickly. In 1989 there were only 600 attorneys, but as of June 1, 2015 there were 12,092 practising attorneys and 3,371 legal trainees registered with the Czech Bar Association.¹⁰ Approximately 3,500 attorneys in the Czech Republic are eligible to provide legal aid.

Licensure

A lawyer qualified in one of the member states of the EU may practise law in the Czech Republic, either as a visiting or settled European attorney. Visiting attorneys do not need to be registered with the Czech Bar Association but they may only provide legal services temporarily.¹¹ Other foreign lawyers may become members of the Czech Bar Association by passing a recognition exam but they are limited to providing legal services in the Czech Republic on international law and other areas, which are governed by the laws of the jurisdiction(s) of their qualification.

Legal Regulation of Lawyers

The Czech legal profession is regulated by the Advocacy Act, passed in 1996.¹² It established the Czech Bar Association, the only bar association in the country. Membership is mandatory for all attorneys practising in private practice (but not for those working in-house or for the government).

LEGAL RESOURCES FOR INDIGENT PERSONS AND ENTITIES

The Right to Legal Assistance

There are several different acts and regulations that provide for the right to free legal aid in the Czech Republic.¹³ Of the existing provisions relating to legal aid, the most basic one is the broad right to legal aid, found in the Charter on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, which is part of the constitutional laws of the Czech Republic.¹⁴ The Charter also guarantees the right to free court-appointed counsel in criminal proceedings.¹⁵ The existing provisions provide access to free legal aid only in court proceedings, making it difficult for clients who cannot afford a lawyer to obtain legal advice in anticipation of litigation.¹⁶

¹⁰ According to the Czech Bar Association, see http://www.cak.cz/assets/komora/zapis_19_predstavenstvo_2015_06_08.pdf (last visited on September 4, 2015).

¹¹ Id.

¹² Zákon č. 85/1996 Sb. (Law No. 85/1996 Coll., the Advocacy Act as amended); Czech version available at <http://portal.gov.cz/app/zakony/zakonPar.jsp?idBiblio=44102&nr=85~2F1996&rpp=15#local-content> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

¹³ See http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/legal_aid/legal_aid_cze_en.htm#2 (last visited on September 4, 2015).

¹⁴ Charter on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, article 37(2).

¹⁵ Charter on Fundamental Rights and Freedoms, article 40(3).

¹⁶ See Veronika Kristková and the Public Interest Law Institute (“PILI”), The Tradition and Current Opportunities for Pro Bono Legal Services in the Czech Republic 10 (unpublished paper on pro bono opportunities in the Czech Republic) (hereafter referred to as: “**Kristková and PILI**”).

State-Subsidised Legal Aid

Eligibility Criteria

Section 18 of the Advocacy Act stipulates that the Czech Bar Association appoints attorneys for free legal aid purposes.¹⁷ The Czech Bar Association publishes information about legal aid on its website.¹⁸ The Act does not set out the eligibility criteria for qualifying to receive free legal aid. Instead, any applicant can submit a petition to the Czech Bar Association detailing their personal financial situation, including the value of their assets and personal income, and the income of any dependents. That information is then assessed by the Czech Bar Association on a case-by-case basis.¹⁹

Civil Procedure Act

The Civil Procedure Act states that an individual may apply to the court for counsel, and the court may grant the request if “necessary for [the] protection of [that individual’s] interests.”²⁰ This Act allows courts to appoint free legal counsel for defendants and victims of crime who can “prove [that] they do not have sufficient means to cover the expenses of their defense.” However, no counsel may be appointed if “the matter is an obviously unsuccessful exercise of, or defense of, a right.”

Advocacy Act

The Advocacy Act stipulates that a disadvantaged party may apply to have a lawyer appointed by the Czech Bar Association.²¹ If the Czech Bar Association considers the case is warranted, it may appoint an attorney to work for free or at a reduced rate. Following amendments to the Advocacy Act in 2006, an individual has the right to obtain an attorney through the Czech Bar Association only after the court has rejected an individual’s request for legal aid.²² The individual must provide evidence that at least two attorneys have previously refused to provide them with legal services.²³ Furthermore, an attorney so appointed may enquire into the financial status of the applicant and the merits of the case and may, upon notifying the Czech Bar Association and the applicant, refuse to represent the individual if the aid sought is “obviously unreasonable.”²⁴ Public awareness of the opportunity to apply to the Czech Bar Association for legal aid is also low and the Czech Bar Association does not advertise it widely.²⁵

¹⁷ See <http://portal.gov.cz/app/zakony/zakonPar.jsp?idBiblio=44102&nr=85~2F1996&rpp=15#local-content> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

¹⁸ See <http://www.cak.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=1680> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Statistics showing the number of appointed free legal representatives for 2005 to 2011 are available at http://www.cak.cz/assets/statistika_urcovani_a.pdf (last visited on September 4, 2015).

¹⁹ See <http://www.cak.cz/scripts/detail.php?id=1680> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Statistics showing the number of appointed free legal representatives for 2005 to 2011 are available at http://www.cak.cz/assets/statistika_urcovani_a.pdf (last visited on September 4, 2015).

²⁰ Zákon č. 99/1963 Sb. (Law No. 99/1963 Coll., Civil Procedure Act) §§30, 138, available at <http://www.czechlegislation.com/en/99-1963-sb> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

²¹ Zákon č. 85/1996 Sb. §18(2).

²² Id.

²³ See European Commission, Legal Aid – Czech Republic, at question 3, available at http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/legal_aid/legal_aid_cze_en.htm (last visited on September 4, 2015). This can be a difficult requirement to meet, as lawyers frequently fail to provide documentation that they refused to represent the potential client in question. See Kristková and PILI at 9.

²⁴ Zákon č. 85/1996 Sb. §§18(2), 19. In addition, only one attorney may be assigned to each case.

²⁵ See Kristková and PILI. The Czech Bar Association also sponsors free legal counselling hours at the seat of each regional court. This is a purely voluntary service that is not widely publicised. See <http://www.cak.cz/> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

The Advocacy Act distinguishes among “Czech attorneys,” “visiting European attorneys,” “settled European attorneys” and “foreign attorneys.”²⁶ Attorneys in the first three categories will not encounter barriers to providing legal aid. It may be more difficult for foreign attorneys to provide a range of legal services, including legal aid.

However, “legal services” are defined under the Advocacy Act as representation in courts, legal counselling and legal drafting, regularly and for remuneration. Thus, arguably, it is possible for foreign attorneys to participate in pro bono work (see below) without meeting the above requirements, as this is not work for remuneration.²⁷ While foreign attorneys will not be permitted to appear in court, they can still be involved in support work for NGOs in areas such as legal research and drafting, as well as providing assistance in understanding foreign legal systems for use before the European Court of Human Rights or international tribunals.

Criminal Procedure Act and other legislation

Other legal aid provisions are found in the Criminal Procedure Act,²⁸ the Administrative Procedure Act²⁹ and the Constitutional Court Act.³⁰ In the 2004 amendments to the Criminal Procedure Act, legal aid practices were elaborated upon and improved in relation to criminal representation. Prior to 2004, the sole legal aid provision of the Criminal Procedure Act simply permitted courts to determine that a defendant had a right to free legal aid if the defendant could prove a lack of financial means.³¹ The Act did not specify any process for the appointment of lawyers – even in mandatory defence cases, where the defendant is required under Czech law to be represented by an attorney. The Act also did not specify the extent of legal aid available for indigent defendants in non-mandatory defence cases.³²

The 2004 amendment to the Criminal Procedure Act established a mechanism for selecting attorneys to be appointed by courts in mandatory defence cases. Attorneys who volunteer to provide free legal defence and who reside in a particular jurisdiction are kept on an alphabetical waiting list and appointed by courts as the need arises in that jurisdiction. Courts also keep a second list of all attorneys in the district, in case no volunteer attorney from the first list is available.³³ Similarly, procedures regarding legal aid in non-mandatory defense cases have become more precise. Another 2004 amendment addressed the problem of defendants who have requested and are granted free legal aid but have difficulty finding a lawyer. The amendment allows the court to appoint an attorney for the defendant at his or her request immediately upon granting them legal aid.³⁴

²⁶ Zákon č. 85/1996 Sb.

²⁷ Id.

²⁸ Zákon č. 141/1961 Sb. (Law No. 141/1961 Coll., Criminal Procedure Act).

²⁹ Zákon č. 150/2002 Sb. (Law No. 150/2002 Coll., Administrative Procedure Act). Attorneys may be appointed for plaintiffs who lack sufficient financial means. However, the plaintiff’s claim must not be “manifestly frivolous.”

³⁰ Zákon č. 182/1993 Sb. §83 (Act No. 182/1993 Coll., Constitutional Court Act). The Constitutional Court may grant legal aid if justified by the applicant’s interests, particularly if she lacks the means to obtain counsel.

³¹ Zákon č. 150/2002 Sb. §35, Czech version of zákon č. 150/2002 Sb., available at <http://portal.gov.cz/app/zakony/zakonPar.jsp?idBiblio=53360&nr=150~2F2002&rpp=15#local-content> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

³² Mandatory defence cases include cases where the sentence allows for imprisonment of more than five years; proceedings involving a juvenile or fugitive; and cases where the accused is in custody or serving a prison sentence. See Karabec, Diblicová, and Zeman, National Criminal Justice Profiles: Czech Republic, 43-44 (2002), available at <http://www.heuni.fi/en/index/publications/nationalcriminaljusticeprofiles/czechrepublic.html> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

³³ Zákon č. 283/2004 Sb. (Act No. 283/2004 Coll., Amendment of the Criminal Procedure Act).

³⁴ Zákon č. 539/2004 Sb. (Act No. 539/2004 Coll., Amendment of the Criminal Procedure Act); Czech version available at <http://portal.gov.cz/app/zakony/zakonPar.jsp?idBiblio=30139&nr=141~2F1961&rpp=15#local-content> (last visited on September 4, 2015).



Despite the procedural improvements and developments in the sector, only a small number of those defendants entitled to free legal aid actually request it. Thus, there is clearly significant room for improving defendants' awareness of the right to request free legal aid.

Draft Act on Free Legal Aid

Attempts to adopt a comprehensive legal aid law have not yet been successful, although the concept of such legislation has been discussed several times at government level. The Draft Act on Free Legal Aid (the "**Draft Act**") signified an attempt to develop comprehensive and uniform legal aid legislation in judicial proceedings. For example, it set forth a standardised means test to be used by the courts in determining the financial status of a party requesting legal aid.

However, the only success to date was the enactment of a narrow section pertaining to cross-border disputes.³⁵ As adopted, it provides for legal aid only in the limited instance where a citizen of another EU member state participates in a cross-border dispute in front of a Czech court, or where a Czech citizen participates in a procedure in front of a court of another EU member state.³⁶ To apply for legal aid in cross-border disputes, the same procedure as set out above applies, i.e. the applicant needs to file a petition with the Czech Bar Association.

Mandatory assignments to Legal Aid Matters

Attorneys are generally required to accept matters assigned to them by the Czech Bar Association unless a conflict of interest exists.

Attorneys acting for clients on legal aid matters which have been assigned to that attorney by the court are compensated for their work by the Ministry of Justice. Legal aid matters assigned to the attorney by the Czech Bar Association are compensated by the Czech Bar Association. The amount of such compensation correlates to the value of the claim and varies from CZK 300 to CZK 5,000 per each legal step, depending on the complexity of the case.

No data is available to assess whether the current state subsidised legal aid scheme is able to meet the legal needs of indigent and marginalised individuals and NGOs in the Czech Republic.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

The main type of alternative dispute resolution in the Czech Republic is arbitration (including financial arbitration). Arbitration takes place under the control of the participants on the basis of a written agreement in which the participants provide that their dispute will be resolved by a designated independent party. This could be either a freelance arbiter (any capable adult who is competent in legal matters) or a permanent arbitration body (in the Czech Republic for example, the Arbitration court is attached to the Economic chamber of the Czech Republic and Agricultural Chamber of the Czech Republic). Arbitration is used mainly for civil property disputes.³⁷

The office of the Ombudsman in the Czech Republic also provides advice and support to people in situations when authorities and other institutions have acted illegally or contrary to the principles of a democratic legal state and good administration, or where such authorities are inactive.³⁸

³⁵ The Law was approved on November 11, 2004, as zákon č. 629/2004 Sb. (Law No. 629/2004 Coll., Law on the Provision of Legal Aid in Cross-Border Disputes within the European Union).

³⁶ See, e.g., zákon č. 629/2004 Sb.; or Pavel Šturma, Report on the Situation of Fundamental Rights in the Czech Republic, EU Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Rights 90, available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice/doc_centre/rights/charter/docs/network_commentary_final%20_180706.pdf (last visited on September 4, 2015).

³⁷ See http://ec.europa.eu/civiljustice/adr/adr_cze_en.htm (last visited on September 4, 2015).

³⁸ See <http://www.ochrance.cz/en/> (last visited on September 4, 2015).



PRO BONO ASSISTANCE

Pro Bono Opportunities

The Czech Republic lacks an entrenched pro bono culture. While attorneys may undertake the occasional pro bono case, such activities are not widely systematised.³⁹

NGOs

Several Czech NGOs that provide free legal services have become established over the last 22 years. Most of these NGOs limit their legal assistance to counselling and provide pro bono advice online, without providing actual legal representation. The exceptions are asylum and immigration cases, which have been brought by NGO lawyers in the administrative courts. The Asylum Act provides that “[a] participant in the proceedings shall be entitled to request the assistance of a legal entity or private individual who provides legal assistance to refugees.”⁴⁰ The funding for such legal aid may be provided by the Ministry of the Interior.⁴¹ Prominent NGOs include the Organization for Aid to Refugees, the Counselling Center for Refugees and the Society of Citizens Assisting Migrants.⁴² The Organization for Aid to Refugees also runs legal clinics for asylum seekers and has partnered with large international law firms on various pro bono projects.⁴³

NGOs are also involved in the legislative process. The Pro Bono Alliance, for example, was a member of a working group within the Ministry of Justice developing the text of the Draft Act. The Pro Bono Alliance also ensured the consultation and participation of civil society during the drafting process. The work on the Draft Act still continues and the Pro Bono Alliance continues to lobby for its adoption.⁴⁴

Private attorneys

In addition to working with NGOs that provide legal services, attorneys interested in pro bono opportunities may get involved in legal reform and public interest organisations. For example, the Counselling Center of Citizenship, Civil and Human Rights works to raise public legal awareness in general, while the Open Society Fund focuses on judicial reform and access to justice.⁴⁵ Organizations like the League of Human Rights focus on specific aspects of citizens’ rights, such as health care,

³⁹ See Kristková and PILI.

⁴⁰ Zákon č. 325/1999 Sb. §21(1) (Act No. 325/1999 Coll., Asylum Act).

⁴¹ Id.

⁴² See Organization for Aid to Refugees, <http://www.opu.cz/en/> (last visited on September 4, 2015); Counselling Center for Refugees, <http://www.migrace.com/en/mission/assistance> (last visited on September 4, 2015); Society of Citizens Assisting Migrants, <http://www.soze.cz/> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁴³ See Organization for Aid to Refugees; Refugee Law Clinic Resources: Prague, available at <http://www.opu.cz/> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁴⁴ See <http://www.probonoalliance.cz/en/access-to-legal-help/law-on-legal-aid-scheme> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁴⁵ See Counselling Center of Citizenship, Civil and Human Rights, http://poradna-prava.cz/poradna/documents_comments_convention.htm; Open Fund Society, www.osf.cz (last visited on September 4, 2015).



education, and international human rights.⁴⁶ In the past many of these NGOs have also worked on issues of discrimination, particularly against Czech Roma.⁴⁷

International law firms interested in engaging in pro bono work in the Czech Republic should also contact the Pro Bono Alliance (formerly the Public Interest Lawyers Association (“PILA”)), which assists law firms in establishing pro bono programs.⁴⁸

The Pro Bono Centrum, a project of the Pro Bono Alliance, was set up to support the development of pro bono legal services. Through this organization, pro bono legal aid is provided to clients of NGOs and not-for-profit organizations. So far, the Pro Bono Centrum has established cooperation with more than 60 attorneys and law firms, and over 50 not-for-profit organizations, and met more than 200 requests for pro bono legal services from not-for-profit organizations and their clients.⁴⁹

Law firms are involved in an increasing amount of pro bono work (including consultancy to not-profit organisations and involvement in the legislative process). As of 2009 the Czech Bar Association added the “Pro Bono Lawyer of the Year” category amongst its annual awards. A number of towns and cities hold regular sessions for their residents where they have an opportunity to ask a volunteering lawyer their legal questions and discuss their disputes. All these recent developments prove that the sector is evolving and new technologies and international influence enhance the provision of free legal aid.

Historic Development and Current State of Pro Bono

The Pro bono legal market started to evolve only recently in the Czech Republic. This development has been intensified by the accession of the Czech Republic to the EU and the Czech legal system becoming more influenced by developments in other European countries. The strong presence of international law firms in the Czech Republic with established pro bono programs has also contributed towards developments in this market.

Barriers to Pro Bono Work and Other Considerations

Laws and Regulations Impacting Pro Bono

There are no separate rules directly governing pro bono in the Czech Republic. There is also no explicit prohibition on free legal services or legal advertising or the solicitation of pro bono work.

Every attorney in the Czech Republic must have professional indemnity legal insurance – it is one of the pre-requisites to be eligible to practise law in the Czech Republic. Such indemnity insurance would also cover any pro bono work.

It is important to note that in-house counsel in the Czech Republic are typically employed on the basis of a labor contract, and as such are excluded from membership of the Czech Bar Association. In-house lawyers would also typically not have professional indemnity insurance as they tend to be employees.

As noted earlier, foreign lawyers wishing to engage in pro bono work are limited to only providing legal services in the Czech Republic on international law and areas, which are governed by the laws of the jurisdiction(s) of their qualification.

⁴⁶ See League of Human Rights, available at http://ec.europa.eu/justice_home/daphnetoolkit/html/organisations/dpt_org_cz_54193_en.html (last visited on September 4, 2015); see also, e.g., Czech Helsinki Committee, <http://www.helcom.cz/en/> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁴⁷ See, e.g. League of Human Rights; Multicultural Center Prague, <http://www.mkc.cz/en/home.html> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁴⁸ See Pro Bono Alliance, <http://www.probonoalliance.cz/cz/> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

⁴⁹ See <http://www.probonoalliance.cz/en/access-to-legal-help/pro-bono> (last visited on September 4, 2015).

Socio-Cultural Barriers to Pro Bono or participation in the Formal Legal System

There are public concerns about the legal system in the Czech Republic.⁵⁰ According to a 2015 research opinion published by the Center for Public Opinion Research of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, only 51% of the people surveyed trusted the courts. According to a 2013 research opinion published by Transparency International, 71% of the people surveyed had the opinion that public officials and civil servants were corrupt.

Pro Bono Resources

The following organisations, amongst others, provide pro bono services and/or run legal clinics in the Czech Republic:

- **Asociace občanských poraden:** <http://www.obcanskeporadny.cz/> (last visited on September 4, 2015) (in Czech only). Provides independent and free legal advice in the form of consultations only and does not provide legal representation in court.
- **Česká Advokátní Komora (Czech Bar Association):** <http://www.cak.cz/en/> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Provides free legal advice in its regional centers.
- **Český helsinský výbor (Czech Helsinki Committee):** <http://www.helcom.cz/cs/en/> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Provides legal counselling and representation.
- **Legal Clinic - Faculty of Law, Palackého University in Olomouc:** <http://www.pf.upol.cz/menu/struktura-pf/centra/centrum-pro-klinicke-pravni-vzdelavani/informace-pro-klienty-studentske-pravni-poradny/> (last visited on September 4, 2015) (in Czech only). Law students provide free legal aid to disadvantaged clients (excluding criminal and commercial law advice), under the supervision of the Faculty of Law.
- **Liga lidských práv (Human Rights League):** <http://llp.cz/en/> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Provides legal services, including representation, in cases involving patient rights, rights of people with mental disabilities, coercive sterilizations, segregation in education and placement of children in institutions, and police violence.
- **Organizace pro pomoc uprchlíkům (Organization for Aid to Refugees):** <http://www.opu.cz/en/we-offer/legal-couselling> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Provides legal advice to refugees mainly on immigration and related legal issues.
- **Právní Akademický Spolek Juristi:** <http://www.juristi.cz/ppp/> (last visited on September 4, 2015) (in Czech only). Run by a students' organization, Juristi, where law students provide online legal counselling in all major legal areas.
- **Pro Bono Alliance:** <http://www.probonoalliance.cz/en/access-to-legal-help/law-on-legal-aid-scheme/> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Promotes better access to legal aid and socially responsible lawyering.
- **Poradna pro občanství, občanská a lidská práva:** <http://www.poradna-prava.cz> (last visited on September 4, 2015) (in Czech only). Provides legal services in person in Prague or via email to immigrants, senior citizens, ethnic minorities, offenders and victims of discrimination.
- **Sdružení pro integraci a migraci (Association for Migration and Integration):** <http://www.migrace.com/en/mission/assistance/pravni-poradenstvi> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Provides legal and social counselling to foreigners, such as asylum seekers, refugees, labor migrants, undocumented migrants and their families.
- **Transparency International:** <http://www.transparency.cz/legal-advice-centre/> (last visited on September 4, 2015). Provides legal counsel free of charge to citizens who have encountered corrupt practices and are willing to report it, e.g. whistleblowers.

CONCLUSION

While further legal aid reform is needed, and awareness must be raised regarding the existence of free legal aid, recent years have witnessed moderate improvements to the legal aid system. More

⁵⁰ See <http://cvvm.soc.cas.cz/instituce-a-politici/> (last visited on September 4, 2015).



improvements may come as the Czech legal system adjusts to meet new international standards. To date, pro bono work has not figured prominently in the legal profession. However, proactive Czech and European attorneys seeking pro bono representation opportunities can register with the courts and the Czech Bar Association. Non-Foreign attorneys may face greater obstacles in getting involved in pro bono work, however they may consider assisting various local NGOs. There have been some instances of international law firms successfully partnering with NGOs in the past, which bodes well for future pro bono opportunities.

September 2015

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